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TYPES, CROSS-NOTING, AND STATUS OF APPLICATION

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DocId Number		Type a plus sign (+) inside this box ->	
INVENTOR(S)/APPLICANT(S)			
LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	MIDDLE NAME< INITIAL	RESIDENCE (CITY AND EITHER STATE OR FOREIGN COUNTRY)
Johnson	Bradley	W.	2050 W. Warm Springs, #1821 Henderson, NV 89014 USA
TITLE OF THE INVENTION (200 character max)			
Method AND Apparatus For A Slot Bonusing System			
CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS >(including country if not United States)<			
2050 W. Warm Springs Rd, #1821 Henderson, NV 89014			
ENCLOSED APPLICATION PARTS (check all that apply)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Specification	Number of Pages	12	<input type="checkbox"/> Small Entity Statement
<input type="checkbox"/> Drawings	Number of Sheets		<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)
METHOD OF PAYMENT (check one)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A check or money order is enclosed to cover the Provisional filing fee	PROVISIONAL FILING FEE AMOUNT (\$)		150
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The invention was made by an agency of the United States Government or under a contract with an agency of the United States Government.

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Respectfully submitted,

SIGNATURE Bradley JohnsonDate 9/21/98TYPED or PRINTED NAME Brad W. JohnsonREGISTRATION NO.
(if appropriate)☐ Additional inventors are being named on separately numbered sheets attached hereto

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**METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR
A SLOT BONUSING SYSTEM"**

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of Invention

The present invention relates to a method and apparatus for a slot bonusing system within a casino.

2. Description of Related Terms

The term "slot machine" is a general term used to describe common gaming products found in almost every casino. These gaming machines are devices used to play a wide variety of casino games. Players insert coins, tokens, cash cards or any other form of currency into these gaming machines in order to participate in a designated game. The outcome of playing a particular game is that either the player will lose or win their bet. Winning bets will receive some type of payment in either currency or prizes.

The term "traditional slot games" refers to the common slot games that provide no additional bonusing features. The most common of these game are the three and four reel spinning slot games.

The term "electronic display" refers to any number of possible devices that can show text, graphics, video, or animation. These devices could be LED's, LCD's, video monitors, plasma displays or many other similar devices.

The term "slot bonusing" is a common term used in the casino industry referring to additional cash or credits that are awarded to players beyond normal game play. The bonus feature of the game is usually performed through a secondary event, or game in order to entertain the player, as well as to reward the player. Players playing a normal slot game are chosen for the bonus either through some type of game play performance criteria, (i.e. receive a certain symbol or set of symbols, or even by just winning one game) or by other popular ways, such as a separate device which pools the amount of coin-in, and after a predetermined amount is reached it randomly chooses a winner of bonus credits.

3. Description of Related Art

The casino games of slot machines and video slots have proven over the last 15 years to be the most popular games in the casino. Slots currently gross more total gaming revenue each year than table games.

Even though the slot games continue to be popular, the traditional slot games have been around for a long time. And like any product that has had a long life span it slowly loses its popularity to newer or more exciting products. The only way to stop this decline is to add new

exciting features to these games in order to draw more attention to them. Traditional slot games are currently at the point that new features need to be added to the games in order to continue the popularity. Since these traditional slot games make-up about 90% of a casino's slot floor, it only makes financial sense to improve these games with new features, like adding a slot bonusing system.

The present invention seeks to enhance the popularity of traditional slot games by creatively adding a bonusing system in order to create greater player satisfaction.

The present invention contains two primary components that other casino games do not utilize, that is a secondary bonus game which sequences an animated event over the electronic displays of two or more machines in a series. And the other being the addition of bonus symbols to the slot machine reel strips, where if a player receives a bonus symbol or accumulates enough bonus symbols during normal game play or during bonus mode that player or players would qualify for bonus credits. This invention also diverges away from other bonusing systems that link multiple slot machines, in that players must first qualify for bonus credits by receiving a bonus symbol(s) rather than the player being selected randomly.

4. Objects of the Invention

It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a new and improved method and apparatus for providing a bonusing system for slot games.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a new and improved method and apparatus for improving the excitement of traditional slot games.

It is a further objective of the present invention to provide a new and improved method and apparatus that is easily manufactured and marketed, and is also durable and reliable, along with economical to manufacture.

Still a principal object of the present invention is to provide a new and improved method and apparatus for generating excitement in a simple and easy to learn manner by having the player earn bonus cash or credits during the ordinary course of playing slot machines.

It is still a further object of the present invention is to provide a new and improved method and apparatus for linking a series of slot machines together in order to creatively provide players with slot bonusing excitement .

It is still even a further object of the present invention is to provide a new and improved method and apparatus for a secondary bonus game in which an animated event is sequenced over the electronic displays of two or more machines in a series.

It is still another object of the present invention is to provide a new and improved method and apparatus for qualifying players to receive bonus awards by the player first receiving the first bonus symbol during bonus mode or through an accumulation of bonus symbols during normal game play.

Still a further object of the present invention is to provide a new and improved method and apparatus for players to receive bonus credits based upon the outcome of this secondary event. The bonus credits are awarded based upon an established prize structure.

These together with still other objects of the invention, along with the various features of novelty which characterize the invention, are pointed out with particularity in the description of the preferred embodiment.

5. Brief Description of the Invention

To achieve the foregoing and other advantages, the present invention, briefly described, provides an apparatus and method for providing bonus credits to players on slot machines. A bank of machines are set up side by side of each other, each having a large electronic display within the top box of the machine. After the bank of machines attains a predetermined performance criteria, the machines will go into bonus mode. At this point, the player or players to receive the first bonus symbol during bonus mode or accumulation of bonus symbols during normal game will qualify for the bonus. After one or more players qualify for the bonus, an animated bonusing event will take place across the electronic meters of each of the machines on the link. A successful result from the animated bonusing event will cause bonus credits to paid to one or possibly more players from an established prize structure. The bonus credits won are then transferred to the credit meter on the winning player's machine.

The type of events that could be used for the animated bonus sequence are unlimited, such as cars or horses racing across the electronic meters of a bank of slot machines, where each race car or horse represents a player who qualified, the winner of the race would receive a random or fixed number of credits. Other possibilities could be an animated character or symbol jumps from one electronic display of one machine to the electronic display of another machine until one player

receives a bonus symbol while the animated character or symbol is on their electronic display. The player would then win a predetermined amount of credits.

The present invention would interface with the traditional slot games based on numerous established communication methods between the slot machine and the bonusing system. The present invention through the use of a communication controller choose those players for bonuses based on bonus performance criteria being met.

The above brief description sets forth rather broadly the more important features of the present invention in order that the detailed description thereof that follows may be better understood, and in order that the present contributions to the art may be better appreciated.

In this respect, before explaining two preferred embodiments of the invention in detail, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited in its application to the details of the construction and to the arrangements of the components set forth in the following description. The invention is capable of other embodiments and of being practiced and carried out in various ways. Also, it is to be understood that the phraseology and terminology employed herein are for the purpose of description and should not be regarded as limiting.

As such, those skilled in the art will appreciate that the conception, upon which this disclosure is based, may readily be utilized as a basis for designing other structures, methods, and systems for carrying out the several purposes of the present invention.

6. Description Of The Preferred Embodiments

A new and improved method and apparatus for adding a slot bonusing system to traditional slot machines, embodying the principles and concepts of the present invention will be described.

In the first preferred embodiment, a bank of traditional slot machines are converted over to a race theme, with new top glass, reel glass, and reel strips. Race theme signage is mounted above the bank of slot machines to further depict the race theme. Located within the top box of each slot machine is a large electronic display used to display the animated race.

The bank of slot machines are linked together by a communication controller which monitors the game play at the machines, while also controlling the bonusing program. The players are playing a traditional spinning reel game. The electronic display of each machine is in attract mode to entice players to sit at the games and play.

The communication controller is monitoring game play for the bank of machines as well as each individual machine, when a predetermined level of play is reached, the whole bank of games go into bonus mode. Players in bonus mode continue to play the games in hopes of being the first players to receive bonus symbols and qualifying for the race. Those who qualify are informed by a message on their electronic display stating they are a bonus qualifier.

After bonus qualifiers are identified to participate for the race, the electronic display in the first machine on the far left will show the beginning of the race, the race will then begin and go across the electronic displays of the other machines. The sequence of this race is set so that it appears to onlookers as if one race is taking place across a bank of machines. The race will finish on the last machine on the link. Of course the race could start on any one of the machines and

finish on any one machine. The graphic quality and the ability of the race to look realistic is in the hands of those skilled in the art of animation or video.

A race announcer's voice could also be programmed into a sound card and will activate when the race takes places, this will create added excitement to the race. The winner of the race will receive a random amount of credits. Those winner number of credits will then be placed on the credit meter of the winning player.

In the second preferred embodiment, a bank of traditional slot machines are converted over a to bonus theme, with new top glass, reel glass, and reel strips. An optional electronic display is mounted above the bank of slot machines which will participate in the bonus theme as well, and will also aid in deciding who the bonus winner is. Located within the top box of each slot machine is a electronic display used to display the animated bonus theme.

The bank of slot machines are linked together by a communication controller which monitors the game play at the machines, while also controlling the bonusing program. The players are playing a traditional spinning reel game. The electronic display of each machine, and the optional large electronic display positioned over the machines is in attract mode to entice players to sit at the games and play.

The attract mode shows an animated character or symbol with a bag(s) of money or other similar representation of currency. The screens and sound package make known to the player that if that animated character jumps onto their electronic display during bonus mode and they receive a bonus symbol, they will win that bag of money or similar representation of currency.

The communication controller is monitoring game play when a predetermined level of play has been reached on the bank of games, the whole bank of games go into bonus mode. Players in bonus mode continue to play the games in hopes of having the animated character or symbol show up on their electronic display and that they receive a bonus symbol while the character or symbol is on their electronic display. Those who win the bonus event will receive a fixed or random amount of credits.

The animated character or symbol will move from electronic display to electronic display of each of the machines that are linked to the bonusing system during bonus mode. The animated character will move in a random fashion between electronic displays, and will stay on anyone machine only for a variable amount of time. The animated character or symbol will continue to move from machine to machine until a bonus winner is determined. The bonusing system will then send the winning amount of credits to the credit meter of the bonus winner. It will appear to the onlookers as if the character or symbol is hopping or jumping or by other means moving from one machine to another.

Voices, sounds and/or music may be included to increase the entertainment value of this bonusing system. The winner of the credits receive a fixed or random amount of credits. Those winner numbers of credits will then be placed on the credit meter of the winning player.

7. Description Of The Bonusing System's Central System

The benefit of this system for the casino is that by having graphics sequenced over two or more machines it will draw the interest of players to play those machine with this invention. The

players also benefit by additional entertainment, significant bonus awards, and frequent bonus wins.

This invention is able perform the above advantages by linking two or more machines to a central communication controller. The controller is able to monitor game play on the designated gaming machines as well as control the bonusing system. A predetermined performance criteria is set from which the play on the games must meet before the machines go into bonus mode. The performance criteria can be any number of game performance measurements (i.e. coin-in, games played, bonus symbols accumulated, etc). The measurements are set so that a certain percentage of the money played by the player is returned to the player in the form of bonus credits. The overall percentage added to the normal slot machine is set so that casino still makes money from the machines but also is set so that the players have a perception that the game pays out more or equal to other slot machines. The amount of credits paid to a winning player can either be a predetermined fixed amount or a random amount that averages out to a predetermined fixed amount. This random jackpot method allows for the opportunity of large jackpots to be paid out, and as a result attracts players to the games.

It is also important to mention that many other parameters could be set to decide how many credits will be paid to the bonus winner, what percentage will be added to each machine from the bonus payouts, how often the game will go into bonus mode, and what performance criteria will be measured to put the games into bonus mode.

After the player has won the bonus credits, the bonus performance criteria resets and the player is eligible to earn bonus credits again.

8. Summary

It is apparent from the above that the present invention accomplishes all of the objectives set forth by providing a new and improved method and apparatus for providing bonus credits to players who are playing traditional slot games. This invention brings new excitement to traditional slot games by integrating frequent bonus wins, chances at large jackpots, the appeal of animated graphics, and the anticipation of game results. This invention would also increase the enjoyment of the players of these traditional slot games and would generate additional excitement and revenue in the gaming entertainment industry.

While the present invention has been fully described above with particularity and detail in connection with what is presently deemed to be the most practical and preferred embodiments of the invention, it will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art that the present invention could be easily adapted to a stand alone product, in which the electronic displays and communication controller are housed within the slot machine. This modification may be preferred by many casinos. This invention could also be used on the new video slot games that are gaining in popularity. Other modifications could also be made without departing from the principles and concepts set forth herein. Hence, the proper scope of the present invention should be determined only by the broadest interpretation so as to encompass all such modifications and equivalents.

To achieve the foregoing and other advantages, the present invention, briefly described, provides an apparatus and method for a slot bonusing system. A player goes up to a traditional slot game and starts playing the game. Established instructions are clearly communicated to the

player for earning bonus credits. When the bank of machines has reached a certain bonus performance criteria, the machine goes into bonus mode. The bonus mode is clearly communicated to the player, usually by a electronic display located within the slot machine's top box. An animated event will then take place over the electronic displays on two or more machines. Those players receiving the winning bonus symbols will win bonus credits. The animated event is setup so that the graphic sequence makes a smooth transition from machine to machine to decide the winner. The winning amount of credits is then sent to the winning player's machine.

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